99TH CONGRESS
2d Session

SENATE

EXEC. REPT.
99-22

THE CONVENTION ON WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE ESPECIALLY AS WATERFOWL HABITAT

SEPTEMBER 18 (legislative day, SEPTEMBER 15), 1986.—Ordered to be printed

---

Mr. LUGAR, from the Committee on Foreign Relations, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany Treaty Doc. 99-28]

The Committee on Foreign Relations, to which was referred the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat, concluded at Ramsar, Iran, February 2, 1971, with a Protocol to the Convention, concluded at Paris on December 3, 1982, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon without amendment and recommends that the Senate give its advice and consent to ratification thereof.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Convention is to provide a framework for promoting the conservation of wetlands through international cooperative and coordinated actions, consultations and information exchanges.

BACKGROUND

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat is known as the Ramsar Convention after the Iranian city where it was negotiated in 1971. The Convention came into force in 1975. The U.S. Observer to UNESCO signed the Convention September 13, 1985. The President transmitted it to the Senate for advice and consent on June 23, 1986. Thirty-nine countries are now party to the Convention.

Although the United States helped draft the Convention, it deferred becoming a party because of opposition by conservationists, who initially felt the Convention was too weak, and by state authorities, who feared U.S. participation would unduly expand Federal authority. Both groups now strongly support the Convention.

71-119 O

S384-8

U.S. participation in the Convention would: (1) complement domestic wetland protection legislation; (2) encourage the Latin American countries to adhere to the Convention, thus protecting the wintering habitat of birds which migrate to the United States and Canada; and (3) provide a framework for sharing U.S. technology and expertise.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has prepared an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). That statement concludes that U.S. participation in this Convention would have a positive impact on the environment.

Summary of Articles

The key provision of the Convention is Article 2 which specifies that each party shall designate at least one wetland area within its territory as a wetland of international importance. The following U.S. wetlands have been designated for protection:

1. Izembeck National Wildlife Refuge/Izembeck State Game Refuge in Alaska;
2. Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge in New Jersey;
3. Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge in southeastern Georgia and northern Florida; and
4. Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge in Nevada.

Designation of these wetlands has been approved by the governors of the respective States.

Additional obligations of the parties to the Convention are set forth in Articles 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the Convention. Article 3 requires Contracting Parties to promote the conservation of the designated wetlands and the wise use of wetlands in their territory. Under Article 4 each party must establish nature reserves on all designated wetlands. In addition, parties are to encourage and promote wetlands research, information exchange, management and training. Article 4 further provides that if a Contracting Party deletes or restricts the boundaries of a designated wetland, it should, as far as possible, compensate for any loss of wetland resources by creating additional nature reserves for the protection of the original habitat.

Article 5 requires the Parties to consult on the implementation of the Convention and coordinate wetlands conservation policies and regulations. Article 6 specifies that the parties shall convene conferences on the conservation of wetlands and waterfowl.

Committee Action

The Committee considered the Convention at its September 9th business meeting. A resolution of ratification was ordered reported favorably by a vote of 15–0. Voting in the affirmative were Senators Lugar, Helms, Mathias, Boschwitz, Pressler, Murkowski, Trible, Evans, Pell, Biden, Sarbanes, Zorinsky, Dodd, Eagleton and Kerry.

Resolution of Ratification

Resolved (two-thirds of the Senators present concurring therein), That the Senate advise and consent to the ratification of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat, concluded at Ramsar, Iran, February 2, 1971, with a Protocol to the Convention, concluded at Paris on December 3, 1982.

○